

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Blue Ridge Forever

Welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature. Today we'll look at a push to protect some of the most important lands in Western North Carolina.

The farming communities of Sandy Mush and Fairview in Buncombe County, the Appalachian Trail corridor, the Little Tennessee River Valley in Macon and Swain Counties. These are but three of the most important natural areas in Western North Carolina – important for their cultural, recreational, or biological significance. However, despite their importance, these areas still face threats from development.

Recognizing that a developing landscape could permanently degrade or even destroy some of the most important natural areas and working lands in the region, ten different land conservancies working across Western North Carolina banded together to form the Blue Ridge Forever coalition. Land Conservancies work with willing, private landowners to protect important lands, and the coalition has identified 28 of the most important unprotected areas where they'll concentrate their efforts to work with private landowners in an effort to protect at least 50,000 acres by 2010.

To be included, the areas had to meet three or more key characteristics – have a significant ecological quality, such as a rare habitat or the presence of endangered species; have high water quality or be a significant water supply; be a part of a system of connected natural areas; have an exceptional scenic view or significant cultural or economic importance; or have significant tracts of workings lands, especially farms and forests. To find out more visit www.blueridgeforever.info.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.